



State of Connecticut
DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

TESTIMONY OF THE DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

IN SUPPORT OF:

**H.B. NO. 5505: AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF A STATE-WIDE PROPERTY
MAINTENANCE CODE**

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
March 14, 2014

The Division of Criminal Justice respectfully recommends the Committee's JOINT FAVORABLE SUBSTITUTE REPORT for H.B. No. 5505, An Act Concerning a Study of a State-wide Property Maintenance Code.

The Division has discussed this legislation with other interested parties who strongly support the need for the study referenced in H.B. No. 5505. The revision we are requesting as a JOINT FAVORABLE SUBSTITUTE REPORT is to have the Division of Criminal Justice through the Office of the Chief State's Attorney responsible for convening the task force instead of the dual assignment to the Codes and Standards Committee, in consultation with the State Building Inspector, as proposed in the current language. It would be our intention to have the task force overseen by the Supervisory Assistant State's Attorney for Housing Matters, and to have all interested and appropriate parties attend and participate. The Division respectfully submits the following proposed substitute language:

The Chief State's Attorney or his designee shall convene a task force which shall select a nationally recognized model property maintenance code and make recommendations as to which changes, if any, are necessary to adapt such code to the state. Not later than January 15, 2015, said task force shall submit its recommendations in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to local governments, public health and public safety.

The Division of Criminal Justice offers this substitute language recognizing that there is a pressing need for the underlying study: Municipal blight stemming from lack of maintenance of existing structures and premises. The elimination of blight through property maintenance is integral to public safety and community well-being. As such, and on its own initiative, the Division in 2008 invited a wide range of parties to discuss the possible adoption of a state housing or property maintenance code for Connecticut. Based on an overwhelming response, we convened an unofficial task force of approximately fifty people to discuss the same question, partnering with local officials and several state agencies including but not limited to the Department of Public Health, the Department of Emergency